

# ARE WE READY FOR THE NEXT WAR?

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

(This is the last of a series of three articles which together constitute, in abridged form, the report made by Bertram D. Wolfe at a membership meeting of the I.C.L.L. in New York.

—THE EDITOR.)

\* \* \*

**N**OW, I come to the central question before us. What of our organization in this emergency? We must frankly admit that we are utterly unprepared for the magnitude of this task which is thrust upon us.

For several years now, we have been doing necessary work, digging into the unions, helping a leftward development of the trade-union movement industrially and politically, and we do not regret a single step that we have taken in that work; we only regret that we have not done enough of it. But we must recognize that, thru the logic of circumstances, and thru the tasks that were in the focus of attention, we have been drifting so far as this aspect of American life is concerned. We have been drifting on a peaceful tide and the upward movement of the C.I.O., the upward movement in labor organization generally, in which we have played an honorable role.

But the time has come, for the sharpest turn in our relations with the general political situation in the country.

Inevitably, given our strength and our inability to engage in independent action on a wide enough scale, we have been objectively playing the role of the most left critics of the New Deal but, at the same time, of supporters of organizations which were in turn supporters of the New Deal.

It may be suggested that we can continue this role which I have characterized as critical support of those who support the New Deal on domestic policies and begin a sharp attack on the Roosevelt foreign policies.

It is our conception that that division of labor is not correct or sufficient. Why? Because as we enter into a war period, the very domestic policies, because of their liberal tinge, become the instruments for the mobilization of the labor movement and the liberals for the war machine.

War, it has been said, is a continuation of politics by other means. It is even more than that. It is a culmination of the politics of the preceding period by other means.

In considering this question, we

must remember that, without the sharpening of the class struggle in time of peace, there can be no talk of revolutionary struggle in time of war. When war comes, bear in mind that the government then at the helm is the main enemy and that the difference between Rooseveltian capital and anti-Rooseveltian capital, once war becomes a reality, is equal exactly to zero, just as on foreign policy it has been equal to zero since the Hoover administration. Consequently, it becomes necessary for our group to rearm and that in the shortest possible time—to rearm our group, to rearm our class, to rearm those who are genuine opponents of imperialist war.

Now, I recognize that what we are saying carries with it the possibilities of new dangers, the danger of falling over into sterile leftism. Well, leftism is always a danger. It cuts off the organization from the masses and it therefore destroys its usefulness. But I want to put myself on record as saying that if I have to choose—and we should not have to choose in an organization with our experience, between leftism and opportunism—I would welcome leftism in a war period as the lesser of the evils. I say this not because a movement which has gone thru what our movement has gone thru need fall into such traps. It need not and it must not. But I say this because we must recognize that a time will come and come speedily when millions of outraged young men of military age will react fresh and for the first time with burning indignation against what they have been led into and then will come an outburst of young and fresh infantile leftism against which we must not react as we would against senile leftism when we saw it in the Communist Party.

I have not forgotten the last World War and my own experiences and those of others at the time and I say that youthful leftism was the hope of the revolutionary movement at that time, whereas opportunism, then as now, will find itself at the other side of the barricades as the spearhead of counter-revolution and imperialist war mobilization.

## New Features In The Coming War

With us, the Leninist position on war has been a sort of mental reservation. We know about it, we hold to it, and we keep it a secret. From now on, we must discover the means to put this in the foreground of our work—and I recognize that this is not too simple a task. Quite the contrary!

"Each war must be judged according to its historical character." And this war presents a number of new factors as compared with preceding wars.

First new feature: Since 1776 and 1789 and 1848 have passed irrevocably into the past, decadent

## A Difference of Opinion

By KARL MARX

(From an article in the *Deutsche-Bruesseler Zeitung*, September 12, 1847.)

\* \* \*

"The social principles of Christianity have now had eighteen hundred years in which to develop. . . . The social principles of Christianity justified ancient slavery, idealized medieval serfdom and are quite capable, in case of necessity, of defending the oppression of the proletariat—even tho with a sad face. The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, comforting the latter with the pious wish for the benevolence of the former. The social principles of Christianity project the compensation for infamies into the heavens and thus justify the continuation of these infamies on earth. The social principles of Christianity explain the vile deeds of the oppressors against the oppressed either as just punishment for the original sin and other sins or else as a test which the Lord in his wisdom places upon the redeemed. The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, degradation, subjection, humility, in short, all of the attributes of the rabble, and the proletariat, if it does not want to be treated as a rabble, needs its courage and its self-respect, its pride and its sense of independence even more than it needs its bread. The social principles of Christianity are sneaky

By M. THOREZ

(From an address of the general secretary of the Communist Party of France, *Daily Worker*, November 22, 1937.)

\* \* \*

"The philosophical materialism of the communists is far from the religious faith of the Catholics. Yet, as contrasting as are their conceptions of doctrine, it is impossible not to see in both that same generous ardor to reply to the century-old aspirations of men for a better life. 'The promise of a Redeemer illumines the first page of human history,' says the Catholic. The aspiration towards a Universal City in labor and love holds up the proletarians who are battling for happiness for all men, declares the communist. . . . The progressive role of Christianity appears still later yet in the efforts to organize charity and solidarity, in the attempt to bring greater justice and peace into the relations between men in the period of feudalism, in the care shown by the monasteries and nunneries—those communist groups, in intention, deed and action. . . . I often like to compare the cathedral builders, inspired by the ardent faith which raises mountains and permits great achievements, with the builders of the new socialist society, the Stakhanovites."

and mean while the proletariat is revolutionary. So much for the social principles of Christianity...."

## FUTURE OF WAGNER ACT AND LABOR DEMANDS

(Continued from Page 1)

set up in the law must necessarily be available only to the workers or their unions for the purpose of curbing the coercive powers of the employers.

### "Unfair Labor Practises"

It is certainly no wonder at all that the employers see in this a violation of everything they have come to believe to be their "natural rights" for, in the thousands of Labor Board decisions, there have been exposed, and forbidden, most of the open and subtle devices by which employers have always prevented labor organization. Among the devices forbidden to an employer today are the following: Establishing, or in any way maintaining, a company union; firing of workers for union activity; interfering with workers in their free choice of a bargaining agency by direct propaganda, threats of any kind or even by expressing a preference in the matter; moving or threatening to move to avoid unionism; refusing to deal with strikers on the ground that they have ceased to be workers by going on strike; laying off union men in the slow period or refusing to rehire them in the busy season out of proportion to their numbers; even dismissing a union man for proper misconduct on the job if

of L. finds itself in substantial agreement with the employers on this question. It is characteristic of the present position of the craft unionists that they must oppose anything that gives a stimulus to the organization of the mass-production industries, for it is the organization of the workers in these industries that spells their doom and threatens to end their stranglehold over the labor movement. Just as the National Labor Relations Board has been subject to the sharpest criticism from the employers, so has it come into direct conflict with the craft unions on two important questions. The first is the matter of determining the "appropriate unit" for collective bargaining and the second is the matter of employer-coercion of workers into the A. F. of L. in order to forestall the organizing efforts of the C.I.O. and frustrate the will of the workers.

In guaranteeing the right of self-organization to the workers, the N.L.R.B. quite naturally had to take into consideration the same factors which made necessary the organization of the C.I.O.—the mass-production character of modern industry and the utter impossibility of organizing the great bulk of the workers along any but industrial lines. It was thus pretty nearly inevitable that the N.L.R.

capitalism in the period of its decline can no longer give birth to progressive wars. No grave-robbing on the part of Earl Browder can alter that fact.

Second feature: In the last world war, the United States and France and England, despite some very queer allies, succeeded in making the issue appear before their masses as democracy vs. autocracy. The allied powers, despite their most earnest efforts in the preparation for the war, were somewhat less prepared than the German machine. So they prepared a second slogan—"unprepared powers" against the "prepared powers"—therefore the "peace-loving nations" against the "aggressor" nations.

In this war, again despite some very queer allies that may bob up and again despite the imperialist motivations involved, certain nations are again mobilizing their masses on the slogan of "democracy vs. fascism." England utilizes the slogan while it negotiates to see if it can get Italy on its side. And Italy will be glad to be on

the side of England against Germany if it can get more out of it, as Germany will be against Italy—remember Italy's wavering in 1914—because imperialist interests are the decisive factors, despite pre-war agreements. Only in the wonderland of the *Daily Worker* does England ignore its imperialist interests to save democracy and Italy ignore its imperialist interests to save fascism.

Again, as in 1914, the "satiated" powers are mobilizing the masses against the hungry powers with the slogan: "Against the aggressors, a concert of the peace-loving nations."

A third new feature in the present war, and the most complicated one, one that should be thoroughly discussed, is that Spain and China and, we can expect, the Soviet Union will be engaged in a defensive, progressive and revolutionary world war. We have had no adequate discussion even in our own ranks on the complications and problems that this question raises.

(concluded next week)